

Melius Inquirendum :
 OR, AN
IMPARTIAL ENQUIRY
 Into the late Proceedings
Against the Bishops ;

WHEREIN

The Kings Supremacy is Vindicated, and His Sovereign Authority in (matters Ecclesiastical) Asserted against all the Popular Arguments of the Times. In a Letter to a Friend.

By W. E.

SIR,

After a long debate with my Self, and many weary Minutes spent in hearing the Argument under Consideration, banded *Pro & Contra* : I came to this Result, To Examine and Enquire (with all the possible Candor and Ingenuity I could) into the nature and merit of the Cause (so much noised in the World) lately depending between the King and Seven of His Bishops; Deliberating upon which, I easily perceived, That thro the Sophistical Insinuations of some Designing men, the Inadvertency of Others, and the Blind Zeal of an Unreasonable Rabble (that neither can, nor desire to distinguish between Truth and Error, in matters Sacred or Civil) many a well-meaning man might be Imposed upon; for which Reason, I conceived it a Duty to Represent to you and the World, an Impartial State of the Case, both Respecting matter of Fact on the one side, and the Right of Power Invested in the Prince, on the other; An Abstract of which, take with all the

brevity that so Important a Consideration will Admit of: The King apprehensive that multitudes of His Loving Subjects might be Ignorant of His Royal Inclination to the Establishment of an Universal Liberty of Conscience (in matters merely Religious) Notwithstanding His Declaration to that purpose had been Published Twelve Months before, thought fit to Repeat the same, with New and Further Assurances of His Resolutions to Adhere thereunto; and signified His Royal Pleasure to the Bishops, that they should Order the Reading thereof, by the Clergy of their Respective Diocesses, at the time of Divine Service; to the end, the whole Kingdom might understand His Majesty's Care of, and Clemency to His People in general; Being a design so Heroick, and founded upon Principles so Primatively Christian, that (perhaps) no Age can parallel in any Prince, since Christianity hath flourished in the World: However, a Junctio of Seven Bishops, Petitioned (or rather Remonstrated) to the King, that the Declaration was Illegal, and founded upon such a Dispensing Power as might at Pleasure set aside all Laws: (a heavy Charge) and that it was a point of so great a Consequence they could not make themselves so much Parties to it, as the Reading of it in Churches amounted to: A bitter Pill to be digested, tho an evident and lasting instance of their implacable Enmity to *Liberty of Conscience*; how fairly forever gilded with plausible and specious Pretences.

The King's Sovereignty thus Arraigned, a Pamphlet to that purpose Printed (which some of the Clergy shewed no small disposition to read in the room of the Declaration) the Mobile & steadfastly possessed with the *Papery* of *Liberty of Conscience*, It seemed high

time for the King to Vindicate Himself, and therefore the Bishops were Summoned to Appear before him in Council, which they did accordingly, and in Conclusion, owned and stood by the Paper presented to the King; and being Required to enter into a Recognizance to Appear and Answer it at Law; they refused, and were therefore from the Council-Board, Committed to the *Tower of London*; which it seems they were not a little Ambitious of; for as they passed along, they Proclaimed to the People to stand fast to the Protestant Religion, as if they had been going to Martyrdom for that Cause; an Ingenious way of courting the Rabble to abet their design of promoting the Ruine of two parts in three of all the Protestants in *England*; by blowing *Liberty of Conscience* off the Stage at one blast: As much as if they had said, Now good People look to it, Popery is going to be imposed on you; Oppose it even to the Death: An infallible way to deceive the unthinking Crowd; for in the Language of the Ingenious *Hudibras*——

*When you at anything would Rail,
Then you make Popery the Scale
To take the height on't; and explain
To what degree it is Profane —*

A Notion so naturally Swallowed by the hot-headed Herd, that they never consider the Event; till the violent Operation (like a dose of *Aqua-fortis*) rages in their miserable Bowels, to their unexpected Destruction. On the 15th day of *June*, being the First day of the Term, they were brought to the King's *Bench-Bar*, by a *Writ of Corpus*; where after the Councils debate on both Sides, they Entered into a Recognizance, to take their Tryals on the 29th day of the same Month, which accordingly they did; the matter they were Charged with,

was, for making and Publishing a False and Seditious Libel: Twelve Gentlemen being Sworn to Try the Issue; after a Long Tryal, they were on *Saturday* the 30th of *June* aforesaid, brought in Not Guilty; and the Rude Multitude as well at the Tryal, as Afterwards, were not a little Uncivil, by Hissing, Hooping, & Hollowing; but whether it proceeded from the *Church-of-England-Principle of Non-Resistance*, I am not able to determine.

One thing I may not Omit, That before the Tryal, it was an undoubted Truth among the Loyal Church-Party, That the Jury were pack'd, made up of Dissenters, and Persons disaffected to the Bishops; and such as if it lay in their way, would hang them, if it were for nothing but their Laun Sleeves: But when they brought them in Not Guilty, they were all Good Men and True, and as clean from Sin, as the *Syrian* from his *Leprosie*, after he had been dip'd seven times in *Jordan*.

Having given you a brief Recital of matter of Fact, I will add a few words respecting the Kings Sovereignty; whence it shall be manifest, That He is not only the Civil Head of the State, but the Ecclesiastical Head of the Spirituality, according to the Constitution of the *Church-of-England*, and *de jure* Metropolitan of all *England*, *Scotland*, and *Ireland*, and may at pleasure, by vertue of his Sacred Function, be concern'd *Circa Sacra*, about Sacred Affairs; for when the Popes Supremacy and Headship was Beheaded by *Henry the Eighth*, to the end he might be Divorced from *Queen Katharina*, he obtained a Statute for the cutting off all Appeals from *Rome*; and to enable the Kings Courts Spiritual and Temporal to determine the same, any Foreign Inhibitions, Appeals, Sentences, Summons, &c. from the *See of Rome*, to be no Let or Impediment notwithstanding. 24 *Hen. 8.* 12. That

this King Annexed all the Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction to the Imperial Crown of this Realm, and the Pope never had greater Authority over the Church, then our Kings are Invested with, by Sundry Acts of Parliament; that which of Old was *Papa*, is no other now, then our Kings being *Pater Patria*.

But doth it not further appear, That at the Coronation of our Kings, they have the Ordination of *Clergy-men*, as well as the Oath of a King; otherwise what means those significant words used by the Bishop, with Unction, Anthems, Prayers, and Imposition of hands, and the same at the Coronation of the Prince, as at the Ordination of the Prelate, *Come Holy Ghost, Eternal God, &c.* And among other things, the Bishop says these Words, *Let him obtain Favour of the People*, (though the Clergy has shew'd him but little of late) *Like Aaron in the Tabernacle, Elisha in the Waters, Zacharias in the Temple; Give him Peter's Key of Discipline, and Paul's Doctrine.* And in Anointing, the Bishop further saith, *Let those Hands be Anointed with Holy Oyl, as Kings and Prophets have been Anointed, and as Samuel.* The Arch-Bishop and Dean of *Westminster*, putting the Coife on the King's Head, and on His Body the Surplice; using this Prayer, *O Lord, King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, &c.* Yet for all this, His Supremacy will be no longer allowed, than it runs on all fours, to the utter Extirpation of all that dissent from our Church; and he must by no means countenance a Toleration, upon Pain of His Sovereignty being called in Question: And if His Majesty insist upon Obedience to His Royal Authority, though in a matter, presumed on all hands to be innocent and just in the Sight of God, and good Men: Yet to colour the design of obstructing Liberty of Conscience, it shall bear the ignominious name

of *Papery* and *Arbitrary Power*; and then our Work is done. And though we stile the King, God's *Vice-Gerent*; and say, *Nixt unto Thee and Thy Christ, Supreme Moderator and Governour*: If he dispute our pretended Prelatical Prerogative, the Church Rabble, in spite of passive Obedience, shall be Animated with the dreadful Apprehensions of Fire and Faggot, to commit all sorts of Outrages; as is evident by the late Ryots, upon Discharge of the Bishops: *Ant Casar, aut nihil*. The Prelates are resolved to be *Os & Oraculum, Regis & Reipublice*; and the Voice of the pretended Loyal Party, is, that the King's dispensing Power is clipp'd, and Liberty of Conscience has received a mortal Wound, and is Breathing its last.

Well, Gentlemen; whilst there is Life there is Hope; the King is still Head both of Church and State; Your

own Concessions allow'd him so once; 'tis not Three-pence Difference, if upon change of Circumstances you have chang'd your Opinions; the better part of his Subjects believe it still; and as long as he is invested with a Power to Command, all good men will be ready to obey his Lawful Injunctions; and (perhaps) to your Shame, and the Confusion of all your Intrigues. 'Tis not to be doubted, but he is sensible of the Indignity done to His Person and Government: However, that ought to be left to His own Princely Conduct.

Thus much I presumed would not be unacceptable, of the Transactions of the time, and the Sentiments of

Your Humble Servant,

W. E.

with Allowance.

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